

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 280725Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9636
INFO AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OEXC, PINT, PGOV, TH
SUBJ: INTERVIEW WITH DR PUAI UNGPHAKON IN THAI-LANGUAGE
PERIODICAL PUBLISHED IN SWEDEN

SUMMARY: THAI-LANGUAGE PERIODICAL PUBLISHED IN SWEDEN CARRIES
INTERVIEW WITH DR PUAI UNGPHAKON (FORMER RECTOR OF THAMMASAT
UNIVERSITY) IN FEBRUARY ISSUE. PUAI QUOTED AS STATING THAT
MILITARY WILL SHORTLY FORCE CHANGE IN RTG, THAT THAI
DEMOCRATS HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE TO MAKING COMMON CAUSE WITH
COMMUNISTS, WHOSE ARMED FORCES, IN HIS VIEW, ARE GROWING
RAPIDLY. VERSIONS OF PUAI'S CURRENT REMARKS, IN VARIOUS MEDIA,
HAVE CIRCULATED IN THAI ACADEMIC COMMUNITY, WHICH TENDS TO THE
VIEW THAT PUAI'S UNDERSTANDING OF SITUATION IN BANGKOK IS DATED.
ONE MYSTERY, WHICH ONLY PUAI COULD CLEAR UP, IS WHY HE FLED
BANGKOK. HE IS ONLY NON-COMMUNIST FIGURE OF ANY REPUTE WHO
LEFT FOLLOWING COUP. OTHER THAI DEMOCRATS INITIALLY STAYED
OUT OF SIGHT FOR FIRST FEW WEEKS BUT RESUMED NORMAL
PATTERN OF ACTIVITY WHEN IT BECAME EVIDENT THAT NO RPT NO
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PROMINENT POLITICAL FIGURES WERE BEING ARRESTED. THEY OBSERVE
CAUTION IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY HAS OBTAINED COPY OF FEB, 1977, EDITION OF QTE
THAI END QTE MAGAZINE, PUBLISHED IN THAI LANGUAGE BY THAI
ASSOCIATION IN SCANDINAVIA, CONTAINING INTERVIEW WITH DR PUAI
UNGPHAKON, OUSTED RECTOR OF THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY IN BANGKOK.

NOT RPT NOT CLEAR WHERE OR WHEN INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE (PUAI WAS LAST REPORTED AS VISITING WASHINGTON IN MID-FEBRUARY). MOST SIGNIFICANT PORTIONS OF INTERVIEW (TRANSLATION BY EMBASSY) AS FOLLOWS:

A. QTE THAT ANOTHER COUP D'ETAT IS IN THE OFFING IN THAILAND IS APPARENT FROM THE CHAOTIC POLITICAL SITUATION IN THAILAND. THE MILITARY, WHICH HAD A MONOPOLY ON POLITICAL POWER IN TIMES PAST, AND NOW CONTROLS THE PRESENT CIVILIAN/MILITARY CABINET, IS READY TO SEIZE FULL POWER VERY SOON. THIS IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE EXTREME RIGHT-WING MILITARY GROUP, THOUGH APPARENTLY SHARING POWER EQUALLY WITH THE CIVILIANS IN THIS CABINET, ARE IN FACT MORE POWERFUL. THUS, THEY CAN USE ARMS TO SEIZE POWER ANY TIME THEY FEEL LIKE IT.

B. QTE I HAVE MADE KNOWN TO MR PALME (I.E., FORMER SWEDISH PRIME MINISTER) MY INTENTIONS AND THE REASONS WHY I'M REQUESTING ASSISTANCE TO LIQUIDATE THE DICTATORSHIP IN THAILAND. THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER HAS PROMISED, REALIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS MEETING, TO BRING THE MATTER TO THE ATTENTION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, SINCE ANY ASSISTANCE WOULD HAVE TO COME DIRECTLY FROM THE SOCIAL DEMOCRAT PARTY.

C. QTE IN WAS ALSO ASSURED OF ASSISTANCE DURING THE MEETING WITH (SWEDISH FOREIGN) MINISTER SOEDER.

D. QTE IN MY OPINION, AFTER THE COUP LAST OCTOBER, THE THAI LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PEOPLE HAVE NO THIRD CHOICE. THE POLITICAL CLIMATE IN THAILAND PROVIDES NO PLACE FOR PEACE-LOVING POLITICIANS OR FOR PEACEFUL NEGOTIATIONS. AT PRESENT, EVERY THAI HAS COME TO A CROSSROADS AND EITHER GOES ALONG WITH THE PRESENT DICTATORIAL GOVERNMENT OR JOINS WITH THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY IN THE JUNGLE.

E. QTE THERE ARE MORE THAN 5,000 PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY SOLDIERS IN THE JUNGLE, STUDENTS, ORDINARY PEOPLE AND OPPOSITION POLITICIANS WHO BECAME LIBERATION SOLDIERS AFTER THE OCTOBER COUP. THEREFORE, WE MUST PROVIDE ASSISTANCE, IN SOME WAY, TO THESE PEOPLE TO ACCELERATE THE STRUGGLE.

F. QTE I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, SUCH AS MEDICAL SUPPLIES, TO HELP SHORE UP MATERIEL DEFICIENCIES, AND MONEY FOR PEOPLE'S FORCE AND THEIR ARMED FORCES. PART OF THE ASSISTANCE WILL BE SENT TO HELP THE UNDERGROUND ORGANIZATION IN BANGKOK; PART, TO THOSE WORKING IN THE JUNGLE; WHILE THE OTHER PORTION WILL

BE USED AS THE GETAWAY FUND FOR SOME POLITICIANS OR PEOPLE
FORCED TO SEEK EXILE FROM THAILAND.

G. QTE RECENTLY, WE HAVE SENT A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF MATERIEL,
SUCH AS MEDICINE AND CLOTHING, TO THE LIBERATION ARMY IN
THE JUNGLE. WE DON'T THINK WE WILL SEND WEAPONS; THE
FREEDOM FIGHTERS IN EACH LOCALITY CAN SECURE THEM FOR THEIR
OWN USE.

H. QTE IN THE PAST IT WAS WIDELY KNOWN THAT THE COMMUNIST
PARTY WAS THE LEADING COMPONENT OF THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION
ARMY. HOWEVER, AFTER THE OCT 6 COUP, A NEW GROUP IS TAKING
ITS PLACE, COMPOSED OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OR JUSTICE-
LOVING PERIORS AND OTHERS WHO ARE NOT COMMUNISTS. END QTE.

2. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION AS TO HOW LONG IT WOULD TAKE
FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE THAI POLICE, PUAI IS QUOTED AS
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SAYING, "THE PEOPLE'S FIGHTERS HAVE FULLY ORGANIZED AND
TACTICALLY MODERN COMBAT UNITS. AFTER THE COUP THE JUNGLE
ARMED FORCES INCREASED ITS FIGHTING POWER. THE UNITS ARE
EXPANDING AND DEVELOPING RAPIDLY...."

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
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USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 CU-02 SAJ-01 ACDA-07 MCT-01
DHA-02 EB-08 AID-05 /107 W
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R 280725Z FEB 77
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3. COMMENT: THE FOREGOING EXCERPTS OF THE PUAI INTERVIEW SOUND LIKE OTHER COMMENTS PUAI HAS MADE IN STATEMENTS IN LONDON AND IN THE U.S. RECENTLY, AND WE ASSUME HE IS QUOTED CORRECTLY. HIS VIEWS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY RADICAL IN TONE, AND HE APPEARS TO BE MOVING STEADILY TOWARDS A COMMON FRONT WITH THE COMMUNISTS. PRIOR TO THE COUP OF OCT 6 PUAI WAS AT SOME PAINS TO MAKE CLEAR TO EVEN CASUAL VISITORS THAT HE WAS NOT RPT NOT A COMMUNIST. REMARKS SUCH AS THE ABOVE WILL PROBABLY BE TAKEN BY PUAI'S CONSERVATIVE CRITICS IN THAILAND AS PROVING WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN SAYING ALL ALONG: THAT HE IS AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN CLOSE TO THE COMMUNISTS.

4. AS TO THE CONTENT OF PUAI'S REMARKS, THE EMBASSY CONSIDERS THAT HE HAS SIGNIFICANTLY MISUNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION IN THAILAND. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION SOME WEEKS AGO OF AN IMMINENT CHANGE IN THE CABINET, BUT THIS HAS FADED AWAY MORE RECENTLY. PUAI'S EXPRESSED APPROVAL OF MAKING COMMON CAUSE WITH THE COMMUNISTS TO OVERTHROW THE PRESENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RTG GOES WELL BEYOND WHAT MOST OF HIS ACADEMIC COLLEAGUES IN BANGKOK (MANY OF WHOM ARE VERY CRITICAL OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT) WOULD ACCEPT. PUAI ODDLY UNDERSTATES THE ARMED STRENGTH OF THE THAI PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY (USUALLY AND PUBLICLY STATED BY THE RTG TO TOTAL ABOUT 8500, RATHER THAN 5000, AS PUAI STATES IT), BUT THERE IS LITTLE CONVINCING EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT HIS STATEMENT THAT THE TPLA IS EXPANDING RAPIDLY.

5. COPIES OF PUAI'S RECENT REMARKS AND INTERVIEWS HAVE CIRCULATED IN THE THAI ACADEMIC COMMUNITY IN BANGKOK. A COMMONLY-EXPRESSED VIEW OF THEM IN ACADEMIC CIRCLES IS THAT PUAI, THOUGH A WIDELY-RESPECTED FIGURE, HAS A VERY DATED VIEW OF THE SITUATION IN THAILAND.

6. AN UNRESOLVED MYSTERY (WHICH ONLY PUAI COULD CLEAR UP) IS WHY HE FLED THAILAND OCT 6. HE HAD SERVED IN HIGH POSITIONS UNDER PREVIOUS THAI AUTHORITARIAN, MILITARY-DOMINATED GOVERNMENTS (OF PHIBUN, SARIT, AND THANOM, FOR EXAMPLE) WHICH WERE AT LEAST RESTRICTIVE OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, IF NOT MORE SO, THAN THE PRESENT RTG. A WIDELY-EXPRESSED VIEW IS THAT PUAI GENUINELY FEARED FOR HIS LIFE IMMEDIATELY IN THE WAKE OF THE MILITARY TAKEOVER AND SO LEFT FOR ENGLAND THE SAME DAY. HOWEVER, OTHER THAI DEMOCRATS, WHOSE FEARS MAY HAVE BEEN AS DEEPLY FELT AS PUAI'S, SIMPLY DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT FOR A FEW WEEKS, LIVING

IN BANGKOK WITH FRIENDS OR ACQUAINTANCES. NO RPT NO
POLITICAL FIGURE OF ANY SIGNIFICANCE HAS BEEN ARRESTED IN
THAILAND SINCE THE COUP OF OCT 6, AND FORMER FIGURES IN
THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS CIRCULATE FREELY IN BANGKOK,
THOUGH THEY ARE CAUTIOUS ABOUT THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS.
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Message Attributes

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